What's Ahead?

As soon as the news came that the war with Japan was over, Publishers' Weekly asked a number of people in the industry to predict what the effects of the coming of the peace will be in the book trade. Publishers never very much like to predict in peace or war. They dislike that scary feeling of being out on a limb. But they responded gallantly. Here is what they say

► As soon as the news came that war with Japan was over, *Publishers' Weekly* asked a number of people in the industry to predict what the effects of the coming of peace will be in the book trade. As might be supposed there are two general schools of thought. Some people see the future as one of immediate or soon-to-be-expected expansion; others foresee an immediate if temporary slump.

Simon & Schuster is among those who see even the immediate future as very bright, indeed. This is by way of being a preliminary to the other predictions which have been sent in to the *Weekly*, since readers of *PW* will have seen the back cover of the August 25th issue in which S&S made its forecast. "Essandess," the statement said in part, "has always proceeded on the theory that book publishing was a sleeping giant. During the past twenty years we have seen that giant occasionally talk in his sleep. The next ten years should see the real awakening. . . " Among other things, S&S foresees the building of ten million new homes and the reconstruction of millions of others, and millions of these homes will provide living room for a billion books. The firm foresees new printing and binding machinery which will make it possible to make better books more cheaply, and then foresees prices coming down; retailing becoming more prosperous; present stores growing; bigger and new ones being opened; and, in addition, book clubs prospering.

Douglas Black, vice-president of Doubleday, Doran, also sees an immediate expansion in the book business.

"A marked increase in the distribution of books published in this country was taking place during the years immediately before the World War," he says. "This expansion has been greatly accelerated during the war. It is generally recognized that millions of people have become regular buyers and readers of books, and it is equally clear that there are millions of others to whom books can and should be made more readily available. The book industry is presented with a challenging opportunity for further extending and amplifying its means of distribution to meet the needs of the rapidly growing reading public. The limitations necessarily imposed during war time are being lifted rapidly. The business prospects of publishers and booksellers are bright and the enlargement of the means of supplying books to the public should be heartening to everyone who recognizes the importance of books."

Frank MacGregor, president of Harper & Brothers, sees a future for the book business that knows no bounds.

"The book publishing business has been unpredictably fortunate during the last four years. Just so it is impossible to predict its future in the years ahead.

"Many factors have contributed to its success, and, aside from government purchases, perhaps the most significant has been an important change in our way of life—our inability to use a car to go wherever and whenever we wanted to. This certainly has intensified the need for enjoyments more inactive—one of which is the pleasure of reading.

"It is not easy for a publisher to predict what our habits will be in the future and on those habits the future of the publishing business depends. But surely many people who have found the reading of books pleasurable during the past few years will continue to find it so in the future.

"We all know that the reading of books has increased enormously in the past few years and it stands to reason that much of this will carry over into the more normal years ahead. And that means that publishers look for an expanded market over the pre-war years, with consequent increase in em-

ployment and production. In fact, it would seem that the product of our industry has a future that knows no bounds."

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR INEXPENSIVE BOOKS

The *Publishers' Weekly,* in order to get some forecast of the prospects for more inexpensive books, asked John O'Connor, president of Grosset & Dunlap, and Ben D. Zevin, president of World Publishing Co., to tell us what's ahead. Both are very optimistic. Mr. O'Connor says that:

"So far as Grosset & Dunlap is concerned, there is as yet no indication of any falling off in total trade demand. Replenishment of depleted trade stocks of standard titles which have been short is expected now that paper restrictions have been lifted. This type of demand may offset any temporary slump in consumer buying. The expectation at Grosset & Dunlap is that there will be no great or long sustained falling off in business either this year or next year. Our plans assume maintenance of volume through the remainder of 1945, and we hope to be ready for the possibility of a substantial increase in 1946 over 1945.

"There will undoubtedly be industry-wide pressure on manufacturing facilities. Temporary labor and machine shortage may turn out to be a providential restraining factor upon the fantastic over-production which might easily result if all the postwar projects came to a head at the same time.

"There will be a certain grim humor in seeing rugged individualists who have chafed under controls approach once more the perils of free enterprise."

Mr. Zevin is very cheerful and very full of specific plans and gives these plans to *PW* readers in considerable detail.

"One of the effects of paper rationing has been to give book publishing a monopoly. We who had been engaged in this pursuit were able to conserve the paper allotted to us and thus increase our volume—while at the same time these very restrictions prevented competition from entering the field. All this will soon end. Competition in the popular-price field especially will return with a vengeance.

"For our part, we are well prepared for it. The success of The World Publishing Company in prewar and war years was due to its ability to maintain an efficient organization, to anticipate and cater to a growing public interest and, above all, to give the public great values. We have used the lush war years to build up our organization and to make postwar plans that are in keeping with these very factors which first proved successful.

"While we are making plans to enter new fields, we mean also to intensify and solidify our position in old fields. Extensive plant modernization is already in progress. New Bibles set in modern faces and bound in traditional bindings will be on the market in the early spring of 1946. Our leadership in this field will be maintained.

"This is equally true of dictionaries. Several new ones are under preparation to meet varying needs. The first of a series of such books will be made available to the public in early spring, 1946.

"We hope to have all of the out-of-stock titles in our *Tower* and *Forum* series back in print within six months. A new development in the distribution of popular-priced, hard-bound reprints will be unfolded very soon. Arrangements are now being completed whereby *Tower Books* will have newsstand distribution throughout the country. Negotiations are now in process with a national distributor. Announcement will also be made before long of the appointment of a divisional sales manager who will be recruited from magazine ranks to head this division for us."

MORE JOBS FOR AN EXPANDED PUBLISHING PROGRAM

Mr. Zevin goes on to say:

"Our plans also call for our re-entry into the juvenile field. As many as fifty titles will be published next year. These will range from pre-school through high school age and will cover price ranges from 25c to $2. The full extent of this program will be announced in October or November.

"To facilitate these plans, it is clear that our personnel requirements will increase by 25 per cent within the next year and that our production requirements will grow by at least 50 per cent.

"In all, it is obvious that we take a very optimistic view of the future of the book

business. The progress of our industry is not solely the result of the war. We have every reason to look forward to 1944-45 as the base from which business will be accelerated. Publishers who think in terms of 1938 as the natural level from which to begin are, in my judgment, erroneous.

"We are in an intensely fascinating and exciting business which, in the years ahead, will make progress only in direct relation to the vision and imagination of the men who are engaged in it."

WELL-STAFFED PRINTING PLANTS AND BINDERIES

Norman Donaldson, managing director of the Yale University Press, is generally optimistic, though he does sound a warning.

"The end of the war came so suddenly that publishing, along with most of the rest of the country, was caught off balance. In our efforts to readjust to peacetime conditions, there will probably be considerable confusion, but with peace here what does that matter? On August 14 we entered a new era, and publishing will in my opinion never be quite what it was before the war or during the war. The first change was a relaxing of government regulations. Of more immediate and practical importance will I think be the return of labor to the printing plants and binderies. This may break the manufacturing bottleneck which has been the sorest spot for most publishers. Also there will be more and better labor for publishing offices, with less turnover through departures for higher wages in war industry.

"Normal conditions in publishing should therefore return before long and make us free to publish to the best of our ability. When that time comes, what will our markets be? In my opinion the postwar and long-term market for books in this country and abroad will be much larger than it has ever been before. In the domestic market we will have the men and women who have been in service and who have had time to read,—and thanks to the Council on Books in Wartime and the OWI have had good books to read. The habit of reading should continue. On the home front, as we all know, the public has been buying and reading books with an abandon that has been almost appalling. To meet this demand, the reprint houses and low priced editions have been stepped up enormously (the battle of the giants!) which will be all to the good. However, there will still be people, many people I believe, who will want "real" books, and we must remember that most books are not suitable for cheap editions. So I think there will continue to be a very big place for the regular publisher of regular books to be distributed through regular channels. This will I am sure be particularly true for university presses, who are doing more and more of the serious and important publishing the country over, so the outlook as I see it is in general good.

"But in spite of the increased market and the freedom from restrictions, I have a strong conviction that publishers and booksellers will not continue to ride along on the rising sales curve that has lifted them into the balmy upper air during the past few years. Uncle Sam, for example, is one nice old customer who has bought his last book,—for the time being, at least. So while I think publishers, and especially university presses, now have what is undoubtedly the greatest opportunity in their history to do important and successful publishing, I do feel it is going to be a tough assignment."

THE FUTURE IS NOT ALL BRIGHT AND CHEERY

All of this is mighty cheerful reading, and the *Publishers' Weekly*, itself, will crawl out on a limb, too, and say that we believe that the outlook for the book business is very rosy even in the immediate future. However, we realize that at this moment while everything is very fluid, a note of caution should be listened to respectfully.

Melville Minton, president of G. P. Putnam's Sons, is one of those who thinks a note of warning is not amiss.

"I join the field of prognosticators," he says, "but with some reluctance because of my gloomy views concerning the immediate future of book publishing.

"I believe that our volume this fall will approximate the volume of the fall of 1945. I expect a sharp downward trend in the first half, at least, of 1946. Many books, not always the cream of the crop, have been postponed from this and last year, and the result will be the publication at the earliest possible date of these heldover titles. I am afraid this may have some effect on the

already heavy inventories of the retail bookstores throughout the country. I believe that we are just about through with the days of filling orders and are now at the point where we must go out and again sell books.

"We, naturally, face a period of considerable unemployment over the country. This, however, should favorably affect our production costs and be helpful in forcing down the abnormal manufacturing prices with which we have had to contend during the war period.

"In the past, the book industry has been slow to react to either boom or depression. While I have no doubt that we face a downward trend in volume in 1946, I am, despite this belief, certain that the future of book publishing and book distribution in the United States is brighter today than in any time in our history. The greatest problem facing book publishing today is the establishment of more sound outlets where books may be bought."

STIFF COMPETITION WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

Lovell Thompson, manager of the trade department at Houghton Mifflin, foresees a slump in reading; stiff competition within the industry; and he does not see much opportunity to employ many more people in the publishing business in the immediate future.

"As I see it there will be less reading now the war is over. There are a lot of things to do that we haven't been able to do until now. There will soon be a lot of things to buy that we haven't been able to buy. The books will suffer from this competition, too. There is talk of a minor relaxation of credit restrictions. We all need so much in the way of replenishing the household plant that I think most family budgets will soon be stretched again, perhaps not seriously, but enough to slow book sales.

"I have heard a dozen different plans: new magazines, new low-priced book series, new book clubs, etc. The competition within the trade is going to be very stiff now, and the expansion of the book market that these new plans envisage will not occur—I should think that dollar books and 75c books would suffer.

"Houghton Mifflin Company is at the moment under-staffed, but when all our people are back from their war work, we shall have a somewhat larger staff than before the war. What we will need principally, is very young men to break into publishing, but we won't want these men for a few years.

"I think book publishing after the war is going to be extremely important to the world. It will be the freest free press there is, perhaps the most serious medium for public discussion there is. But I don't think there is an enormous expansion coming, and I don't think it is going to be a wide open cinch."

AVAILABILITY OF PRE-WAR NECESSITIES MAY CAUSE SLUMP

William B. Ziff, president of Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, says that in his opinion a spirit of over-optimism exists as to the prospects for any large increase in bookselling in the postwar period. He estimates that in spite of the limitation of the use of paper, 30 per cent more books were actually distributed during the past year than at the high point reached before the war. It was a seller's market, he says, and books were economically printed on light weight paper. Returns and remainders were at a minimum. The book market, Mr. Ziff thinks, is now near its peak and unlimited supply of paper will probably bring about a moderate increase in sales for a short period and after that sales will probably fall to something below the presen figures and level off there. "Many who formerly bought books will have their money and attention drawn away by the new availability of automobiles, refrigerators, houses, foods and other necessities, and by a severely decreased real income measured in terms of purchase power. This does not mean that the book business is going to pot. Quite the contrary. The book business is solidly established. But is will not be the unlimited bonanza many now consider it to be."

Helen Dean Fish, children's book editor for the J. B. Lippincott Co., is optimistic as to the future market for books for boys and girls. Miss Fish says:

"If toys in any appreciable numbers return to the market by November, I think that will have some effect on the children's book market, but I do not expect now or

later any sweeping away of the fine new body of children's book buyers which the war years have built up. After all, there is a heady joy to buying books which quickly becomes a habit!"

MORE AND BETTER PAPER FOR VALUABLE OLDER CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Miss Fish continues:

"I believe firmly and enthusiastically that a steadily growing book buying public is in process and that credit should be given to efforts of all kinds that have sprung out of war activities and necessities—for instance the Army and Navy book programs; the Council of Books in Wartime; the Women's Council responsible for the Treasure Chests; the new Children's Book Council; the new Pocket Books high school project, etc. etc. All this has also affected the range and quality of books published. Publishers are becoming more aware than ever before of varied needs and specialized publics among readers young and old in this great democracy. Witness widening interest in biography, history, geography, social studies and science. More people are wanting to know more about more of the world.

"The children's editors will be deeply grateful for more and better paper for the saving of valuable older books before it is too late, and they will be delighted with the prospect of publishing a larger list of new books than has been possible for the last few years; also to be able to welcome once more *new* authors and artists.

"I think production problems may continue difficult for months to come, both because the plants cannot quickly build up equipment and trained manpower and because of the great volume of reprint business that will press upon them with greater freedom of paper supply.

"As to employment prospects, I see no reason why a children's department, unless it ran on a shorter staff during the war, should immediately expand in personnel. Such expansion might come later, when production conditions have actually made possible a definite expansion of publishing programs. As far as I know, most of the houses maintaining children's departments have kept their staffs intact, for although the lists were shorter during these last years, a children's editor's work in getting her books written, illustrated and manufactured has been understandably harder than the prewar production of twice the number."

Malcolm Johnson, vice-president of D. Van Nostrand Company, and Edward P. Hamilton, president of John Wiley & Sons, have given *PW* their specific reasons for their optimism as to immediate expansion of the market for technical books Mr. Johnson says:

"From the materials point of view things look better than they have for a long time, although some grades of cloth will apparently be short for many months. Printing may ease a little too. One Boston firm told us earlier this week that they had suddenly had more applicants for jobs than they could use. In other words books of all kinds should be more freely available this fall than they have been since 1941."

RADAR AND ATOM BOMB HAVE AROUSED INTEREST IN SCIENCE

Mr. Johnson goes on to say:

"From the sales point of view, leaving out school and college sales and looking only at the bookstore situation, it is obvious that the immense contract cut backs throughout the country will affect one large group of purchasers, at least temporarily. Against that, men are returning from the forces in increasing numbers, and many of them will be looking for books for information as well as for entertainment. My own guess, and it is only that, is that sales of informational books will not drop far, if indeed they drop at all, and we are planning heavier than normal expenditure in promotion this winter. Reconversion, in machines and in skills, will require books, and technical and scientific titles on certain levels are likely to have increased bookstore demand. In addition such things as radar and the atom bomb are leading the public as a whole to want more information on many phases of science."

"Our plans for future development are being laid in many directions, and we believe that at home and abroad new demand for books will continue to grow."

Edward P. Hamilton says:

"Answering your questions on how book publishing looks at present and in the fu-

mediate future, we can speak only as publishers in technology, science and related fields.

"With the probable enrollment of many men from the armed services in colleges this fall and winter, the college textbook business should improve considerably and it should continue to grow as more students reach the upper division years, in fact within a year or two the colleges seem to believe they are going to be overrun with students.

"Concerning reference books, there is likelihood of a brief period of reduced sales but as reconversion gets under way in earnest, there should be a substantial increase in demand among engineers and other scientific men for books as tools in their new activities. This group will undoubtedly include men who have been in war work as well as men who have been in the armed services."

TECHNICAL PUBLISHERS ANTICIPATE INCREASED PUBLISHING PROGRAM

Mr. Hamilton continues:

"As to employment, our firm is holding positions open for a considerable number of men and women who went out from our organization to the armed services and who we trust will be returning soon. In addition, it is our expectation that we shall have to add new personnel to our various departments as postwar business develops.

"Technical publishers during the war years have been unable to issue the number of titles they would have wished, since generally the important scientists and engineers who normally would write books have been busy with government research projects. As soon as these projects have been terminated, we anticipate a greatly increased publishing program."

Harry L. Gage, president of Mergenthaler Linotype Co., is the only one in this field whom we consulted.

"Mergenthaler Linotype has no factory problem in reconversion," he says, "because its war work was done largely with its normal machine equipment but it has a very large backlog of delayed orders for linotype machines and matrices. This means at the present time a considerable delay in shipments on current orders. Labor conditions are largely the key to the picture.

FOREIGN MARKETS FOR UNITED STATES BOOKS

No one in the course of all this predicting has mentioned the export market as a factor in our expanding book market. USIBA, however, gives us reason to expect that foreign markets for United States books will open up more and more.

In the few months of USIBA's existence, a solid foundation has already been established which more than justifies expectations for American publishers' postwar foreign operations.

In Europe USIBA's plans have been greatly aided and accelerated by the trip of Edward M. Crane, its chairman, to England, Belgium, France, Switzerland and Sweden. Growing out of this, American publishers shortly will be furnished with a formula which will solve the problems of the European distribution of American books and translation rights.

From the trip recently completed by Whitney Darrow and Edward P. Hamilton to Australia and New Zealand, USIBA has obtained invaluable information for the most effective resolution of American postwar publishing interests in those new markets.

It is confidently believed that in the Far East American publishers will enjoy one of the greatest outlets for American books and in this respect USIBA is now making preparations to meet this challenge when it becomes a reality.

In Latin America, USIBA has already formulated plans to open branch offices and display rooms in several of the publishing centers. Eugene Reynal, managing director, is now in Mexico City studying arrangements for opening a branch in that city.

In line with America's greater consciousness and awareness of the importance of export to the economy of this country, USIBA will furnish American publishers with a source of basic material and information which will permit them to solve most effectively the problems of foreign operations. Also, as a non-profit quasi-governmental organization, USIBA provides United States publishers with the instrumentality to compete on favorable terms with other nations; particularly with those nations having subsidized export sales.